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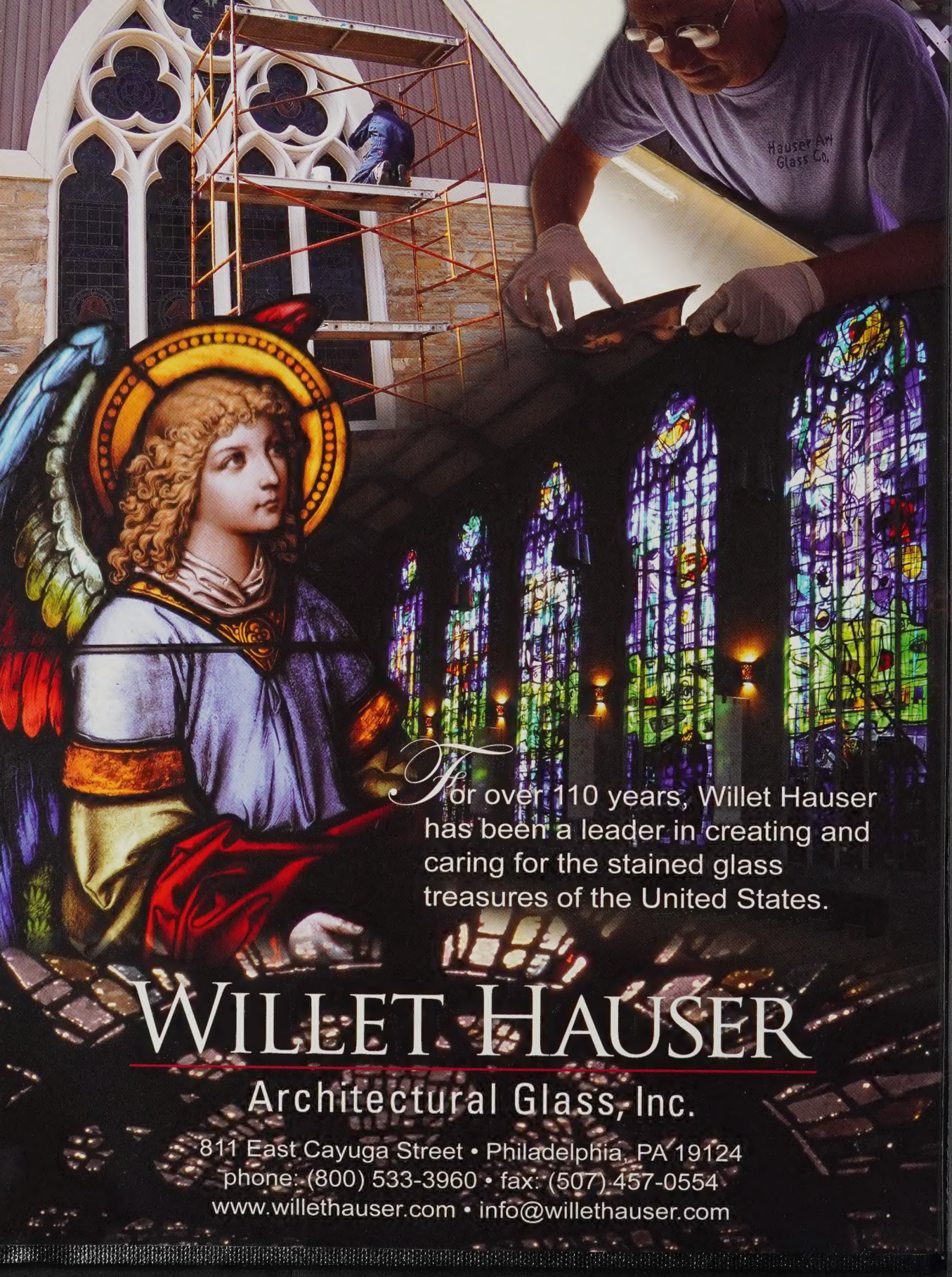


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EDUCATION ISSUE
Doing MORE With Less



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NEXT ISSUE:
A potpourri of
articles about new
developments in
sacred art and
architecture.



NO MINARETS, PLEASE, WE'RE SWISS

EDITOR'S PAGE ★ MICHAEL J. CROSSBIE

THE 21ST CENTURY'S FIRST DECADE, a span of ten years marked with rising religious fundamentalism, intolerance, and sectarian violence around the world, closed with a new ban on minarets in Switzerland.


Huh?

That's right. At the end of November a majority of voters on a referendum in Switzerland decided that the best way to fight the country's growing Muslim population was to ban the construction of minarets. The action, which sounds like a plot twist in an old Woody Allen movie, was the result of a move by the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP) to counter what it perceives as the growing presence of Islam in the country of fine chocolates and secret bank accounts. Islam is the second largest religion in Switzerland after Christianity. Of the country's 7.7 million inhabitants, there are about 400,000 Muslims. The referendum's supporters view the minaret as a symbol of the power of Islam. By banning minarets, they figure, Islamic identity will be held in check, at least on the country's skyline.

At one level, this idea invests incredible power in architecture. To deny one religion to build an iconic architectural feature of its place of worship is a way to deny that religion's existence, or at least its legitimacy. The campaign to ban minarets was publicized by posters showing a woman dressed in a shadowy burka, standing in front of the Swiss flag, which was studded with an array of black, pointy minarets, arranged like so many nuclear missiles. The architecture became the weapon – a

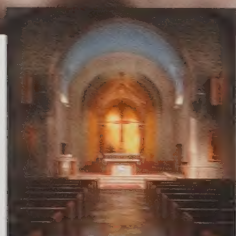
threat to the future existence of Switzerland. The majority of voters, 57.5 percent, cast their ballots to disarm these minaret missiles by preventing any more from being built. Switzerland, you might assume, must be awash in minarets. Actually, in a country covering nearly 16,000 square miles, you can count the number of minarets on one hand (there are four). In the past few years, applications to construct two new minarets were turned down. The Swiss aren't taking any chances.

The fact is that the number of minarets in a given country cannot be correlated to the strength of the Islamic faith in a country, or to the number of Muslims. Scientists have studied this phenomenon very carefully, under controlled laboratory conditions, and have found no connection. Scientific evidence further suggests that limiting the number of minarets has very little if any effect on the power exercised by Muslims. But, there is absolutely no debate among those in the scientific community that an attempt to crush a religion, or to control what some see as religious extremism, by banning the construction of minarets typically has the opposite effect. It also tends to make other people who are not Muslims think that it's OK to attack members of the construction-deprived religion and to vandalize mosques, which has already happened in Switzerland (but was not in evidence before the campaign to ban minarets was underway).

In the next issue, we'll discuss how French President Nicolas Sarkozy is championing the rights and freedoms of Islamic women in France by banning the wearing of burkas in public. 

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EMERGING FROM THE MELTDOWN

What congregations and architects should keep in mind in a recovering economy

By Robert I. Evans and Avrum D. Lapin

AT ALMOST NO OTHER TIME IN RECENT HISTORY have houses of worship faced so many monumental challenges in balancing budgets and envisioning transformation: in the way they operate, how they interact with their constituents, and how and what they might consider when approaching the possibilities of renovations or new construction. This angst is similar to that facing other nonprofit organizations across the U.S., but houses of worship have often not been truly prepared to wage effective large capital and endowment campaigns—until today. Now approaches and “tools” not previously utilized are available, and architects are an integral part of the solution.

Coping with a recession and other unprecedented challenges in both 2008 and 2009 placed religious groups of all sizes and denominations in unenviable positions. Religious leaders at all levels have mounted never-before-dreamed-of outreach efforts that require changes in long-standing thinking and methodologies. Facing staffing and other rising costs, many have been forced to trim essential spiritual, educational, and social programming when people of faith are pressing for more and relevant services. With giving somewhat down and calls for services up, where should clergy and others turn?

PROFILE OF GIVING

Donations to religious causes have increased steadily every year for the past decade, according to the Giving Institute and its seminal Giving USA publications. Even during downturns in the economy, donors have always supported houses of worship at significant levels. In fact, in 2008, giving to religion represented 35 percent of charitable dollars donated to all causes, and projections for 2009 and 2010 suggest that this rate of giving will continue unabated. Considering that donors turn to their houses of worship more frequently during bad economic times; the results reflect more generosity, especially if those congregations are actively asking for voluntary financial support.

According to a study by the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, as of October 2009 the majority of U.S. congregations did not see declines in giving, and only a little over a third of these congregations reported making budget cuts in 2009. In addition, the recession has proved to be a learning experience for congregations, with close to 40 percent reporting more open communication about money and giving, and 28 percent offering personal finance courses and seminars (since 2008).

From our decades of experience in working with a spectrum of faith-based and other nonprofit projects, the houses of worship that were the most successful and that best met the expanding needs of their members were the ones that pursued their fundraising efforts assertively. The push for annual appeals remained generally strong as long as congregations' short-term goals were clear and understandable.

One critical result of the bad economy was that leadership of many congregations finally began to recognize the need to build their endowment funds and to achieve financial security for future downturns or other unexpected challenges. Probably one of the most important benefits we have seen is the realization that these types of campaigns must be a priority.

While annual campaigns have continued, capital campaigns have been nearly nonexistent. Congregational leaders and members often set aside the priorities of much-needed renovations and refurbishments. With expected economic expansion in 2010 and 2011, we hope that cap-

ital campaigns for long-delayed maintenance and growth will resume, becoming a necessity for many congregations. While still cautious, we are seeing more confidence in donors who are regaining financial strength, while their congregations are readdressing many of the facility-related issues that were tabled over the last two years.

ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE BUILDING

Once economic recovery moves ahead, delayed or stalled capital projects will, by necessity, move forward but will probably take on new meanings and embrace some new approaches. Nonprofit facility design, construction, and renovation projects, especially for houses of worship, will begin to mirror those of the for-profit world in a number of ways. Most important, the emphasis on being “green” will become more prevalent, and this philosophy will characterize significant capital campaigns for religious facilities at a pace that we have never before witnessed.

Typically, houses of worship have not chosen to build environmentally friendly facilities. Facing “front-end” price tags for construction that are often 5 to 10 percent higher, leaders have found difficulties in justifying higher costs. Tax incentives that exist for organizations in the for-profit arena have no relevance for any nonprofit project. But there is hope: while the tax issues have not changed, costs have decreased momentarily, and, most important, the interest among donors in supporting green projects has grown exponentially.

“Going green” is rapidly—and finally—becoming the new “buzz,” and environmental consciousness is catching on like never before in the nonprofit world. Until now, scant attention has been paid to making houses of worship environmentally conscious or friendly, other than with small-scale innovations like recycling and the use of compact-fluorescent bulbs. Now leaders and donors are demanding plans that emphasize energy efficiency and a variety of other actions that will have long-term impact. Many leaders and donors recognize this now, while others are slowly learning how an investment in their congregation today will lead to a more cost-efficient and eco-friendly tomorrow.

In conjunction with building more environmentally friendly facilities, congregational leaders and the architects they retain will need to build maintenance endowment funds into project budgets. The capability to address deferred maintenance must become a top funding priority in capital campaigns, in terms of both “green” and routine upkeep. It makes fundraising, environmental, and common sense to build houses of worship that are beautiful and efficient, yet also reflect the vision and possess the resources to manage for small and large future repairs instead of waiting until problems become catastrophic. Being good stewards of our planet and of our houses of worship should theoretically be basics of all construction and renovation projects today.

EXPANDING ROLE OF ARCHITECTS AND PLANNERS

So where can architects and planners of houses of worship make their greatest impact? We suggest three key areas:

Architects as part of the fundraising team

In order to get the most out of any capital project, architects must reassert their presence and be welcomed as an integral part of a congregation's fundraising team. Architects and campaigners must recognize and develop this synergy and openly embrace the value each other

brings. Especially through the ebbs and flows of the capital campaign process, the visionary team of clergy, congregational leaders, and architects joined around the “higher purpose” can keep the energy and campaign momentum strong.

Some architects have been reluctant to get involved in fundraising, unfortunately seeing it as “beneath” them. And capital project leaders have failed to make architect involvement in campaign efforts part of the formal package. An architect’s abilities to convey the vision of the project to potential donors is truly invaluable and is a testimonial that donors will appreciate and understand. A project’s architectural team can reflect technical knowledge of the project and show how their design plans represent the nature and personality of the congregation, key elements in the “selling proposition” of the campaign. Similarly, the leadership team must be inclusive in their efforts and encourage participation by their architect in meetings and “asks.”

One major Midwestern congregation we worked with did not heed this advice. Leaders rebuffed the efforts of their architect when he offered to attend leadership meetings and play a proactive role in the campaign process. This was a huge mistake. It severely diminished opportunities for cohesion among the campaign team and the congregation-wide understanding of the project, and cost the project significant charitable support. It is imperative that clergy, professional staff, volunteer leadership, fundraising counsel, and architects join as one campaign “sales force,” whether for emerging and innovative green” projects, which require even more strategy and cultivation, or more time-proven efforts.

Architects as advocates for environmental priorities

The next few years will continue to be a reorientation for both campaign teams and architects, as houses of worship look to explore innovative capital projects with an emphasis on “greening” their buildings. We recommend that all participants enter the process with an open mind and commitment to innovation throughout all steps of the fundraising journey. Campaign leaders and architects will need to educate their congregants on the vast benefits of creating environmentally friendly facilities, counteracting the perception among some who may see them as excessive or as cost centers to be avoided as institutions try to be more conservative in these difficult economic times. It is important to stress the money-saving aspect, as well as the vision for a more sustainable congregational future. Each fundraising endeavor, in this way, could and should be a community-building experience in which every member plays a role. This will determine the project’s level of success and the efficiency with which it is completed.


One architectural firm with whom we have established a close relationship spearheaded the efforts in creating a LEED-certified building for a midsized congregation unsure of what fundraising path to take. The congregation was clearly dedicated to respecting the environment yet had not considered taking the steps to become a green facility. The architect’s ability to convey the importance of such a project and its ability to ensure a brighter, more efficient future ultimately convinced the leadership that their house of worship should strive for this certification. The neighbors adjacent to the house of worship were so moved by the thoughtful efforts to sustain the surroundings that they were vocal supporters of the plans and enabled the construction to move forward without a hitch.

Architects as advocates for fiscal management


Previously, we indicated that some forward-thinking houses of worship have become proponents of endowment development. Going forward, architects for religious facilities must emphasize that at least 10 percent of the construction costs should become a budgeted endow-

ment opportunity whereby dollars are set aside immediately to fund major future expenses that cannot be paid out of annual budgets. These costs range from HVAC and other equipment changes to such basic expenses as new carpeting, wall coverings, lighting fixtures, and the updated nuts-and-bolts aspects of any modern facility.

The principals of one architecture firm reached out to us in 2009 because they were starting to position themselves as a quasi-unique resource to churches and synagogues. We suggested the three points that frame this article, yet we have still seen reluctance on their part to become proactive in fundraising. Is this an expression of their own nervousness about seeking voluntary giving, or is it a conversation that requires even more explanations? These architects may be hesitant to break traditional barriers, but this proves to be a significant disadvantage for both parties.

We feel confident that capital campaigns will once again become part of the daily considerations for houses of worship, yet new elements and dimensions will emerge. There are a few key points to remember as capital renovation projects or new construction projects begin. Our advice to clergy and volunteer leaders: create a strong, diverse fundraising team and make sure that this team includes your architect and design team. Internally, align the purposes of the building committees and the campaign leadership, and synergize their efforts. These groups must work in tandem to promote campaign success. 

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Hard Times Teach Good Lessons

By Gerald Allen

AS THE ECONOMIC OUTLOOK BRIGHTENS, congregations that have been struggling to squeak by can start to relax, right? Wrong. Tough times teach useful lessons for handling ongoing maintenance and for managing new building projects.

Even if you listen with just one ear to today's flood of economic opinion and forecasts, you will gather that, by and large, things are looking up. Recovery may be mild or strong, and there may or may not be a second dip somewhere along the road. Still, most experts agree that better times are on the way. However, it is wise to remember that bad times are not all bad. They can teach us permanent lessons for the good times that lie ahead—and for future hard times that will sooner or later roll in again.

In the world of congregations and their buildings, there are at least two lessons. One is about getting ready for economic stress long before it actually arrives. The other is about coping with it once it does. Both lessons are illustrated by the experiences of an institution I have worked with as architect since 2005, St. John's Church in Larchmont, New York. St. John's is a medium-size parish of the Episcopal Church. It has around 850 active members, most of them professionals who work in New York. Its annual operating budget is around \$1 million. There are two full-time clergy, a part-time organist, two part-time administrative assistants, and a full-time custodian.

St. John's buildings consist of the church itself, a pleasant 1894 Victorian Gothic structure designed by a son of church members who was a recent graduate of MIT. On one side of the church is a capacious Gothic Revival parish hall with classrooms, a parlor, and a kitchen, built in 1897 and beautifully renovated a decade ago. On the other side is a building with offices, more classrooms, and a nursery school built in 1957. All these buildings need constant care, year by year. Here lies our first lesson.

KEEP UP WITH UPKEEP

When the recession officially began in December 2007, St. John's was already well into the second year of a decade-long plan for preventive maintenance. James Vardell, Senior Warden of the vestry, the church's governing body, explains, "We knew we were not doing a good job of maintenance because, when something became significantly deteriorated, we would call a person in, and they would find more problems than we knew we had, and

they would tell us we could have avoided or lessened the expense of repairs by taking some action earlier." The church kept having problems like these, Vardell says, because "we had no institutional memory for dealing with the on-going maintenance of the church. We have a full-time rector and a full-time curate, who tends to be here for only a few years. Everyone else except our custodian is part-time. And we have a vestry that comes and goes on a rotating basis. So it falls unfairly to the rector, or to some kind-hearted, dedicated church member, to keep track of everything from changing filters in the furnace to replacing the boiler, repointing the stonework, and checking the sealing and caulking around doors and win-

dows." This, Vardell and the vestry concluded, was too much to ask.

Five years ago they hired William J. O'Connor, who had helped the Roman Catholic archdiocese of New York manage their large portfolio of buildings. Coincidentally, just as St. John's was looking for someone like him, O'Connor had decided to start his own company, Professional Project Management, Inc. What O'Connor and St. John's had to deal with was the fundamental, unavoidable fact that all buildings—churches and otherwise—are subject to constant, gradual, and almost entirely predictable decay. St. John's buildings were in some respects overdue for attention. O'Connor did a full survey of the



A rendering of the church interior, probably from the 1920s and possibly by the Rambusch Decorating Company. The stenciling and other ornamental painting was not completely executed.

bricks and mortar and machines and systems at St. John's and came up with a ten-year plan in three parts: things that needed attention soon; things at the other end which needed attention sometime within the next ten years; and things in between. He then began meeting with a vestry member and the rector once a month. As decisions were made on specific repairs, O'Connor called in suppliers and got bids. "We had," Vardell admits, "some significant capital expenditures in the first couple of years to get caught up."

In addition to its buildings, St. John's also has several specialty items that need care. One is the organ, a three-manual, 38-rank electro-pneumatic instrument originally built by Austin Organs, and gradually cared for and modified over time by St. John's unusually knowledgeable organist in collaboration with a nearby organ builder, Konzelman Pipe Organs.

Currently they are slowly replacing the original wind-chest actions with new ones. There is also a committee of people with experience in fine arts who direct the conservation of St. John's several Old Master paintings given by an earlier rector of the church a century ago, and its important collection of stained glass windows. The latter, for practical purposes irreplaceable, are currently in the process of being restored one by one. After that they, like all stained glass, will need regular monitoring.

All in all, the carefully planned maintenance program at St. John's is deemed a success. "It's been working great," says Vardell. "We now have a much higher degree of confidence that we know our buildings are taken care of, and that we're not going to get caught by surprise with a big expenditure that was unanticipated." Moreover, in tough times like the current ones, as Carla Berry, former senior warden and chair

of the Design Committee, points out, "if there are things that need to be done but aren't absolutely necessary, then having the plan gives us the flexibility to put them off for a year or two."

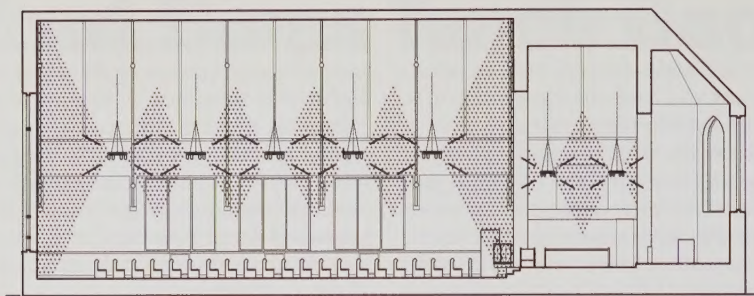
Figuring this out requires no advanced degrees and little perspicacity. It is basic good sense. In fact, the most amazing thing about proactive maintenance programs is that so few religious buildings have them. In my experience there are few who have programs as effective as St. John's.

BUILDING PROJECTS THAT INVIGORATE CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

My work at St. John's during the past three years has focused on a project to renovate the interior of the church. Carla Berry says, "We had done the renovation of the parish hall some years ago, and we had made a few improvements in the nursery school building,



The interior of the church as it looks today. The walls were painted bright white and the original altar, choir stalls, and chancel paneling were removed in the 1960s.



Section through the church showing the arrangement of new hanging fixtures in the nave, each with three lighting elements: one for focused downlight on the pews, another for ambient lighting upward, and a third to provide a glow within the fixtures themselves.

But we really didn't do anything at all with the church, aside from putting in air conditioning when we renovated the parish hall. Nor had we even begun to look at what the issues might be. So we knew, even as we sat back and enjoyed what we had done, that we should make an overall assessment of the church."

The church appears to have been renovated in the 1920s, when the current hanging light fixtures were installed. Then, in the mid-1960s, when Victorian architecture was still seen as something of an embarrassment, the whole sanctuary, including some of the original decorative stenciling, was painted a bright white, and the chancel was modernized by removing its original paneling and furniture and installing a free-standing altar. In the late

1970s, heavy red carpet was laid in the nave.

The current renovation plan began with two obvious issues. One was the old wiring in the building, the other was carpet on the floor. "We thought that since we really needed to install new wiring," Berry points out, "we might also want to think about improving the lighting, which a number of people thought was inadequate." The floor was an issue because the carpet was so worn it had to be replaced. A number of people wanted to replace it with a more acoustically reflective material.

Replacing the flooring will involve removing the pews, and so arose the question of whether to return them to their original 33-inch spacing, which was fine for 1894, or increasing it to today's more standard 36 inches. In doing that, would it make sense to use the extra pews to restore the original choir stalls? They were originally identical to the pews but had been replaced in the 1960s with something more Danish Modern. And should restoring something like the original colors and stenciling be considered? And so it went.

A 15-member design committee was formed, representative of a very broad range of opinion among the congregation. Having the committee this large, and this representative, was intentional. So, also, was letting the committee's work be relaxed and deliberate; in the end, we had two series of meetings over 18 months. The first began in September 2007 and continued for eight months. The second began in September 2008 and ended four months later with a document describing the proposed design in detail.

The committee met frequently, took field trips to other churches, and staged presentations and question-and-answer sessions with the congregation. They also consulted an acoustician, Scott Pfeiffer of Threshold Acoustics in Chicago; lighting consultant, George Sexton in Washington; and a mechanical engineer, Clete Davis of Clebit Enterprises in Chicago, who had special experience in

making heating and air-conditioning systems quiet. Hugh Harrison, an expert in traditional church fittings, also helped by designing new light fixtures and new furniture for the chancel.

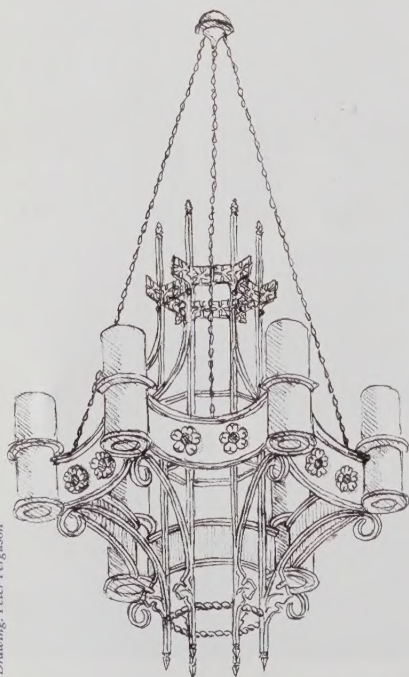
"In our plan," says Berry, "we looked at almost everything so we would have a good road map, whether or not we would proceed in phases or all at once, now or later." A conscious strategy was implemented based on the belief that planning and executing new construction or remodeling can be an invigorating and solidifying experience for a congregation. Having so large a committee and working so deliberately was intended to accomplish two goals: It helped assure that the proposed design would be something most church members would actually approve of and would also support. The committee's work, in other words, was also the beginning of a fundraising campaign. "We had more diverse points of view and therefore stronger disagreements," says Thomas E. Nicoll, rector of the church, "but in the end it has turned out well."

KEEPING CONSENSUS ALIVE

The design was completed in January 2009, just as the extent of the current economic crisis became clear. A significant number of church members lost their jobs in New York, and most people, like most people everywhere, were feeling the pinch. Proceeding directly to fund-raising and construction, as had been the original plan, was now out of the question. That fact raised the subsequent question of how long the consensus so carefully wrought could survive, since it is a perishable commodity. How could we keep interest alive while waiting for times to improve?

Nicoll is sanguine about the possibilities. "The documents we've developed are attractive and understandable," he says, "and that will help a lot in keeping the vision alive. Also, having a very large and utterly diverse design committee was a good idea. Among them they're in touch with most people in the parish. In a few months," he adds, "we'll have a better idea of where this is going and when. At that point we may decide that to keep this alive we need to have some open meetings to pull people in."

Another possibility would be to build the project in several stages. This is more costly than doing it all at once, both in dollars and also in inconvenience. But the extra expense may be worth it in view of the cost of having consensus fade. If that happens, then it will be important to begin with the pieces that create maximum effect with a minimum of means. One strategy would be to begin with the floor — the opposite of the usual procedure of start-




One of three custom-designed fixtures for the committee to choose from.

Drawing: Peter Ferguson

ing high, then finishing below. But removing the carpet and replacing it with new flooring are relatively inexpensive. Also, the results will be not only noticeable to the congregation but also surprising. The organ and choir will sound better and so will the congregation, as they sing hymns and make verbal responses during the service.

TAKEAWAYS FOR TOMORROW

A friend of mine who is a clergy member once told me, "The good thing about completing a building project is not just that you get it done, but also that you get it behind you." By this he meant that finishing up a project successfully lets the church move on to other (and perhaps even more important) matters. The key word is successfully. Moving on is much easier if there is a shared sense among a congregation that the project was done well, and that it represents the wishes of most people.

As for planned, proactive maintenance, there is virtually nothing to be said against it: First, it is the cheapest way. Second, it gets you in the habit of doing it, so that you can learn to budget for it. And third, when times get hard, you can put on the brakes and know that you probably will have no horrible surprises. "Because we have a small endowment," says Carla Berry, "we were in the fortunate position at St. John's of being able to set some money aside to begin the plan. If your church is struggling just to pay its clergy and run its programs, then it is much harder to focus on a maintenance plan. And starting one will involve stark choices." Still, a plan will tell you, frankly and candidly, just what it really costs to have a religious building. And it will warn you that, if you can't manage this cost, then eventually—and inevitably—your building will start to fall apart, and you won't have one at all. 

GERALD ALLEN IS AN ARCHITECT (GERALDALLEN.COM) AND AN EDITORIAL ADVISOR TO FAITH & FORM, WHO WORKS AS A CONSULTANT TO CHURCHES AND TO OTHER ARCHITECTS ON RELIGIOUS PROJECTS IN THE EASTERN U.S.

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The new sanctuary was added onto the original sanctuary wing to the right, which is now a fellowship hall.
Inset: The 1955-era building was virtually untouched for 50 years.

Lutheran Church of Madison

Madison, Connecticut › Duo Dickinson, Architect



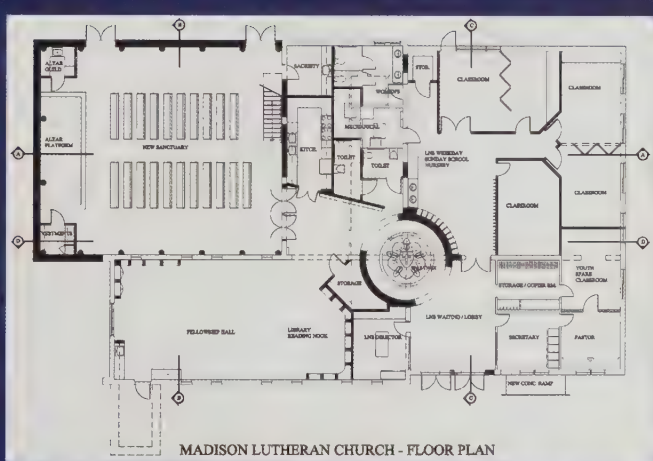
The new sanctuary glows from within, expressing the timber structural frame, visible through clear and translucent glass.



Round narthex acts as an orientation device and delivers visitors to the new sanctuary beyond.



The new sanctuary as viewed from the balcony, displays its expressive timber frame and abundance of natural light.



Original plan elements are shown with white walls, while addition walls are shown in black. A new round narthex was created as the hub of the plan.

The Lutheran Church of Madison, Connecticut, founded in 1949, built a sanctuary in 1955. In 2001 the church was thrilled to receive a building lot in nearby Killingworth. They assumed they could build a new building with pledged gifts and the proceeds from the sale of their existing building. When bid, the actual costs of building their new design outstripped any possible funding they could raise.

The congregation moved forward by taking a fresh look at their existing building, this time thinking budget first. Duo Dickinson, Architect, who regularly contributes pro bono work through his

practice, designed options that accommodated the funds that were available, approximately \$1.2 million. Edward Stanley Engineers contributed all but the timber frame's structural design services, while the project's builder, Waverly Construction, partnered with Bensonwood Timber Frame, which provided "left over" Douglas Fir timbers to great advantage at lower-than-retail cost in the sanctuary.

As Dickinson describes the approach: "We put the institution in the driver's seat with aggressive bidding and open-book costing-out of all options to allow for a direct connection between value and cost." The 8,000 square feet of new

and renovated space (a 3,000-square-foot new sanctuary and choir loft, and 5,000 square feet of gutted and rehabbed space: bathrooms, kitchen, sacristy, all nonbearing interior walls and surfaces) plus a revamped parking lot, new septic system, and entry recycled every bit of the existing building. The built result allows the church to accommodate full family programming, requiring one central entry for education, worship, and parish hall functions. To preserve a sense of the sacred despite this common entry, an internal "narthex" rotunda was created at the joint between parish hall, kitchen, worship space, and the common lobby.

Beth Abraham Synagogue

Levin/Brown Associates › Dayton, Ohio



Uniquely innovative, economically beneficial, and spiritually uplifting describe Beth Abraham's new facility. Created entirely within the walls of an existing three-story office building, this example of adaptive reuse provided the congregation with 27,000 square feet of multifunctional space including sanctuary, chapel, social hall, kosher kitchen, library, bride's room, administrative offices, and religious school. Levin/Brown & Associates, Inc., was engaged to study the viability of converting the existing office structure to a synagogue in comparison to building a new building on an as-yet-to-be-determined site. Levin/Brown created a concept for the renovation and worked with a local general contractor

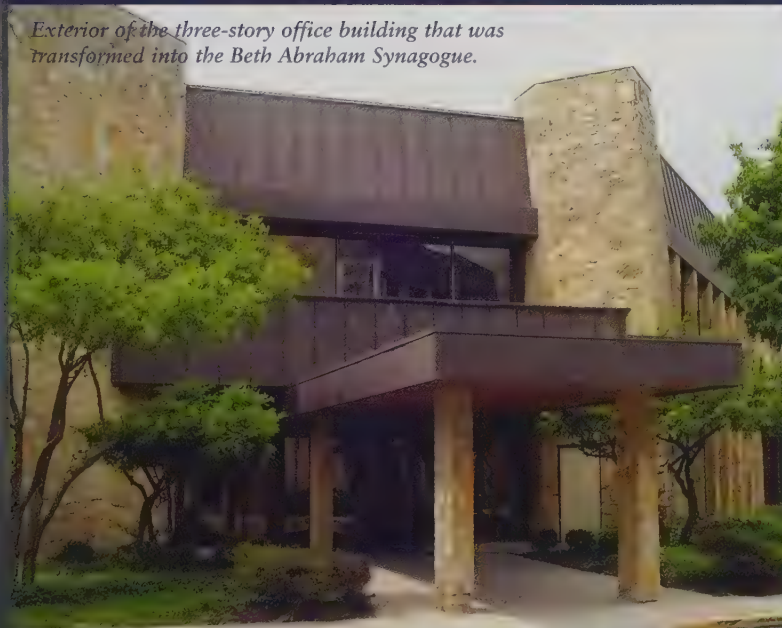
to provide services including value engineering, cost estimating, and scheduling. The study indicated the realization of significant savings resulting from the donated land and building, which included a developed parking lot, utilization of existing infrastructure, the reuse of much of the existing shell, and the modification, rather than wholesale replacement, of the mechanical systems.

A two-story sanctuary crafted by removing a portion of one office floor takes maximum advantage of existing windows overlooking a parklike setting. New seating arranged in a semicircle provides an intimate and communal atmosphere for worship. Multiple expansion rooms allow for the incremental

increase in capacity dependent upon need. Relocating Beth Abraham Synagogue to its new home created many unique design opportunities. A banquet-quality social facility incorporated state-of-the-art lighting and finishes, while a flexible configuration allowed for a variety of layouts to support a variety of needs. Significant pieces of stained glass from the old facility were seamlessly integrated into the chapel and sanctuary. This link between the old and the new helped to blend the congregation's rich history with their new building and was yet another example of a sustainable building strategy that came with significant savings when compared to the cost of creating new stained glass.

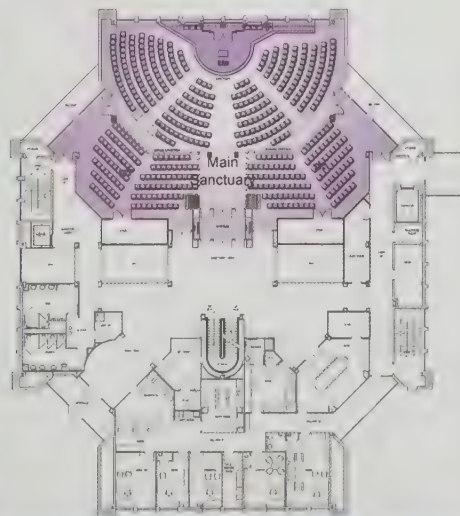


Interior of the day chapel, where stained glass from the old vacated synagogue is incorporated.



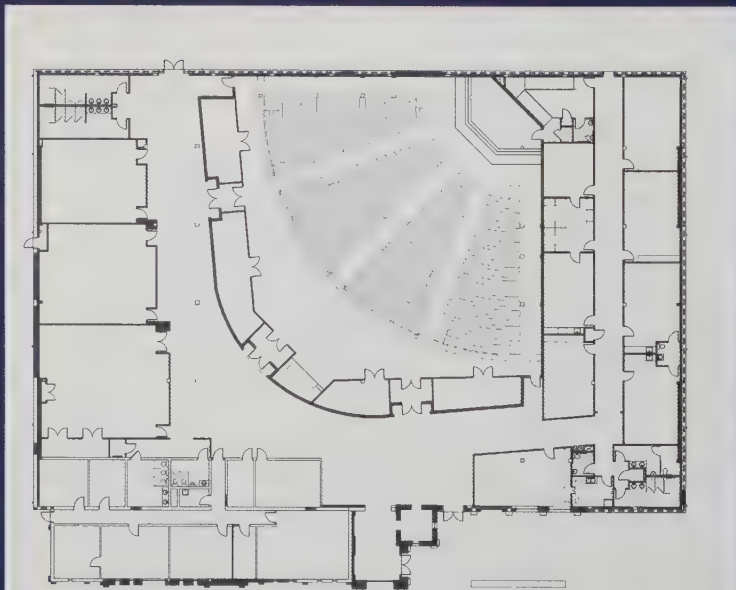
Exterior of the three-story office building that was transformed into the Beth Abraham Synagogue.

Plan showing the renovated office floor containing the synagogue and its double-height sanctuary space.



Christ Church of the Carolinas

Neal Prince Architects › Columbia, South Carolina



Plan of the new facility within the warehouse shell.

The idea of reclaiming an unwanted warehouse resonated with the ministry goals of this church. It also provided an opportunity to build enough space for the growing congregation while exercising good stewardship of their financial resources. The existing building would need extensive work, but would provide more space than a new structure of the same cost.

The program called for a worship space for 600, with flexibility to expand to 900. The worship area needed a strong focus on a large-scaled pulpit, signifying a reverent regard for preaching and hearing God's word. An orchestral area located near the front would indicate the importance of music in worship. The featured instruments, such as piano and violins, called for good natural acoustics within the overall space.

The design challenge was to radically transform the unattractive warehouse, turning the large mass of the exterior into human-scaled elements with a strong sense of entry. The industrial interior needed to become a place of quiet warmth.

The design keeps the overall building shell intact, while carefully adding elements that ameliorate the perception of worshipping in a warehouse. Natural materials, such as stone on the exterior and wood in the interior, bring warmth and refinement. A bell tower and monumental wood doors provide a focal point for entry as well as a signifier for "church." Within the sanctuary, the limited ceiling height of the existing steel frame is addressed with a system of suspended gypsum board "clouds" that lend a sense of openness while providing enhanced acoustics and concealing duct systems and lighting. Two columns were removed and a long-span steel girder was added to create an open seating area. Other existing steel columns were incorporated into a series of new wood-clad columns that create the side aisles in the space.

The project was executed through a collaborative teamwork approach, with a contractor working with the design team from the start. By evaluating the cost impact of various systems and materials throughout the design process, the design and construction team helped the church leaders make cost-effective choices. The emphasis on teamwork allowed for simplified drawings, which reduced the cost of architectural services.

The project was designed and constructed under an abbreviated schedule. The fast schedule also kept costs down, allowing the church to spend less on construction overhead and more on finish quality. At approximately \$3 million for 32,000 square feet, the final cost of the project was about half the cost of a comparable new facility.

A bell tower and stone entrance take the focus off the 'warehouse' nature of the building.



The open nature of the new worship space was achieved by removing columns and strengthening the structure.



St. Joseph of the Holy Family

Lawrence Hoy, Renovata Studios • Harlem, New York, New York

This project began with design and consultation meetings with the pastor, Reverend Philip Kelly, and a renovation and building committee from the parish. Their two main requests were to stay within budget and to respect the African-American heritage of the congregation. The parish was founded by German immigrants, and the church was built to emulate the churches they left behind. The new congregation wanted a shift from this pseudo-European design to something "Afro-centric." Renovata Studios researched the art and furniture of several African tribes including Zulu, Yoruba, and Swahili, which inspired a design direction for the new liturgical elements.

The budget of \$75,000 was extremely tight, as it included painting the sanctuary with a new color scheme and extending the altar platform. The liturgical furnishings were designed with forms and details that could be fabricated at low cost. Renovata built all of furnishings in its studios. The total cost for the liturgical furnishings was \$43,300, including the altar, ambo, celebrant's chair, tabernacle with a throne, and tabernacle doors, along with processional candle stands and a crucifix.

The solid granite altar was affordable thanks to its simple yet sculptural forms. The ambo, celebrant's chair, and tabernacle screen are of African wood veneers, Bubinga and Anegre, on plywood construction, which is both easier to use than solid lumber and more stable in large fabrications such as these. The great symbol on the tabernacle doors was created on birch plywood decorated with a combination of aluminum, copper, and imitation gold metal leaf. The imitation leaf is nearly as lustrous as the real 23-karat gold leaf, but must be treated with a sealer to preserve its brightness. The effect is a shimmering backdrop that visually separates the tabernacle from the Eucharistic ritual. When opened, the doors are decorated with a radiance that accentuates the tabernacle for devotional worship after mass. All of these methods are visually effective without breaking the bank.



Detail of the tabernacle.



The new sanctuary is decorated with themes derived from African art.



The tabernacle doors swing open to create a setting for Eucharistic veneration.

First Christian Church, Disciples of Christ

David F. Schultz Associates, Ltd. • Gurnee, Illinois



*The entrance to the church,
with its residential bearing
of a large house.*



The domestic scale of the church is expressed in its exterior form.



The worship area is illuminated from above through a residential skylight.

The floor plan allows for future expansion of the sanctuary; current worship space would serve as a narthex.



The Disciples of Christ is often referred to as "the most American of historic denominations." This project was for a small Disciples of Christ congregation who asked the architect to design an economical building that would reflect the frontier heritage, simplicity, and basic theological tenets of the denomination and the thriftiness of the congregation. The congregation strongly desired a design that could be constructed by local tradespeople and members of the congregation who were residential/light commercial general contractors and subcontractors; they also wished to have systems and materials that would be inexpensive and simple to operate and maintain.

The solution was to incorporate as much residential-scale material and equipment as possible. The architect estimates that employing this strategy saved approximately 18 percent over the cost of employing larger commercial contractors (with their traditionally higher overhead) and commercial materials and systems; the construction cost for the building was approximately \$100 per square foot. With the exception of the commercial elevator (necessary to comply with the accessibility code) and the aluminum curtain wall entry system, the entire building is composed of high-grade residential materials, some of which include vinyl siding; metal-clad stock wood windows; prefinished aluminum cladding, gutters, trim, and down spouts; residential skylight; wood studs in standard spacings of 12 and 16 inches (to eliminate excess framing); wood trusses; gypsum-board walls and ceilings; residential-scale HVAC units in multiple zones; residential light fixtures; residential prefinished wood flooring; and high-grade residential carpeting.

These economies, along with the white exterior and interior, reflect the simplicity and thriftiness desired by the congregation. The forward-thinking stewardship of the congregation is reflected in the careful planning for future additions in a long-range master plan wherein the current sanctuary becomes a narthex, and a new sanctuary is constructed immediately adjacent. Maintenance and operation of the building are simple as well. With the exception of the elevator, all systems can be serviced by residential repair services. The church received a *Faith & Form*/IFRAA design award in 2003.

Transcendent Christ, St. Francis Chapel

Bill Hopen, Sculptor › Muncie, Indiana

Many religious art clients want bronze, but can't afford it. What's the alternative? Artist Bill Hopen offers them copper at a fraction of the cost, with the look of bronze. For the St. Francis Chapel, the client wanted an eight-foot-tall figure of Christ that would have cost \$90,000 and would have weighed more than 800 pounds. They were not satisfied with imitation bronze material, either.

At less than half the cost of bronze, Hopen created *Transcendent Christ* using the copper *repoussé* technique. First a small design maquette is made, then a large clay figure is sculpted (just as one would for a bronze). A rubber mold is then created over this clay figure. For the *repoussé* a reinforced concrete figure is cast within the rubber mold to provide a hammer form. The 20-gauge copper sheet is shaped on the concrete figure in sections by means of hammering. The copper is annealed, i.e., softened by heating with a torch flame to make it easily worked. As the copper is hammered it "work hardens," becoming very stiff and rigid.

In the past the copper was held together with riveted joints (such as those used in the Statue of Liberty), sometimes over an internal skeleton of iron. Another antique method of assembling the hammered copper sections would have been to solder the joints. Hopen chose to TIG (tungsten inert gas) weld the hammered copper sections together with pure copper wire, then to chase and hammer the joints until they were invisible. The finished work is a taut, one-piece object, strong and rigid enough not to require armature support, yet weighs less than 60 pounds.

Its light weight also allows the work to be mounted and presented in a way that would not have been possible in cast bronze: suspended by thin cables in midair above the altar. The hammered texture breaks up reflected light, and the impressionistic surface shimmers softly to reveal rich tones of deep red/orange natural copper.

Sections of the copper are TIG welded with copper wire and the seams are hammered smooth.



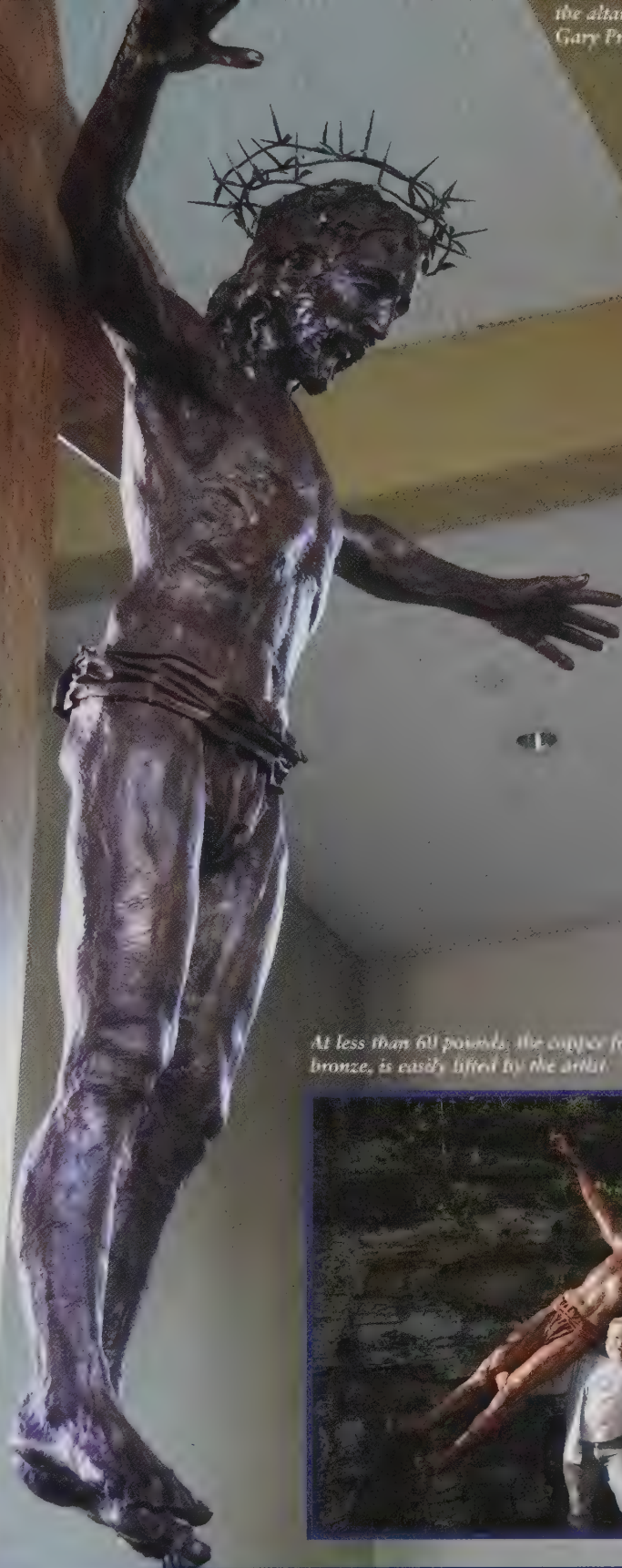
The copper is softened with a torch before it is worked on a concrete form.



Detail of the head of the finished copper figure.



the altar in the chapel, with a cross by Gary Prater.



At less than 60 pounds, the copper figure, with the appearance of bronze, is easily lifted by the artist.



Assumption B.V.M. Church

Lawrence Hoy, Renovata Studios › Feasterville, Pennsylvania

By the time Renovata Studios became involved in this interior renovation, the contract had been arranged to restore the pews and a "faux stone" vinyl tile had been chosen to replace the red carpet. However, there was no overall vision for the finished worship space. Renovata requested a moratorium on further design decisions until a cohesive program and master plan could be completed, along with a strategy to squeeze as much as possible into the limited available budget.

The goal of the master plan was to respect the existing architecture and to create a vibrant space for liturgy. The new program suggested a redesign of the sanctuary platform to include wheelchair access and better placement of altar, ambo, chair, and tabernacle. Some elements in the sanctuary needed to remain, such as the beautiful altar and communion rail of

Indian Rosewood created for the parish in 1958 by famed woodworker George Nakashima.

The new designs were approved in time to schedule the site work along with removal of the pews. The choice for new flooring material was changed to ceramic tile, which was under \$3 per square foot and installed by a local company, owned by parishioners, which helped keep costs down. To improve the appearance of the walls and ceiling new accent colors were added to the recently whitewashed interior. By painting the ceiling beams with a three-color treatment and the columns with the same brick color as the walls, the columns virtually disappeared. A crew of artisans from Renovata traveled to Pennsylvania to do the work, and spent the week lodged in the church rectory, with meals provided by parish volunteers, which saved more money.



Renovated worship space enhanced with color, giving the altar more focus.

This created a wonderful bond between the parish and the crew, and by the end of the project crew members were considered honorary parishioners.

The new design for the sanctuary platform was built by Renovata. Special care was taken to carefully remove the original Nakashima communion rail and incorporate it into the new platform as the railings for the access ramp. The other Nakashima furnishings were removed and the original oil finish restored by hand. A former side altar that had been previously modified was used as a base for the ambo with a new reading desk fabricated of similar wood. The new granite font was designed so that the bowl would be installed for the completion of Phase I, allowing the parish to perform baptisms; a temporary immersion pool can be used until the permanent one is installed.



Worship space in its original condition.



Original Nakashima altar and furnishings, behind which the original communion rail serves as an access ramp rail.

Agapé Mission Church

Ziger/Snead Architects › Elkridge, Maryland

Founded in 1994, Agapé Mission Church moved to its current home in 2002 and set up a ministry center in one half of a newly purchased, 1980s warehouse. Having outgrown their worship hall, the church approached Ziger/Snead Architects in 2006 to design a new, larger space in the unused portion of the warehouse. The architect worked with the church's building committee to verify the program for the expansion and to develop a plan to convert a former commercial electrician's offices in the unoccupied portion of the building into a new narthex, chapel, pastoral team office, and 500-seat worship hall.

Designing within an extremely tight budget (\$1.6 million), Ziger/Snead devel-

oped a scheme for the new worship hall comprising 11,000 square feet that left the existing industrial construction intact. Within it was built a finer-grained shell of wood, recycled newsprint panels, and translucent plastic. Worship at Agapé is highly varied, with music, controlled lighting, and computer-generated multimedia. The worship hall is designed much like a black-box theater, with sophisticated lighting, audiovisual systems, and daylight control.

The design team worked with the owner to establish a hierarchy of priorities before the design process began, then brought in a contractor during the design phase to help the team find alternative, more cost-effective solutions to achieve the design

goals. Design attention and resources were focused on key spaces (mostly the worship hall) rather than diffused throughout the project.

Standard assemblies and simple, inexpensive materials were used in creative ways. The worship hall wood-panel walls, for example, are of simple solid maple, birch plywood, plastic sheeting, and recycled newsprint panels to create a rich-looking space. The contractor brought in a talented woodworking professional who contributed suggestions on challenging construction details.

The message in this project: build a great team who can learn from each other's talents and focus their attention on getting more for less.

Entrance to the church, housed in a former warehouse.





Overview of the sanctuary, articulated with warm wood and natural light.



Entrance into the sanctuary, which is just off the lobby.



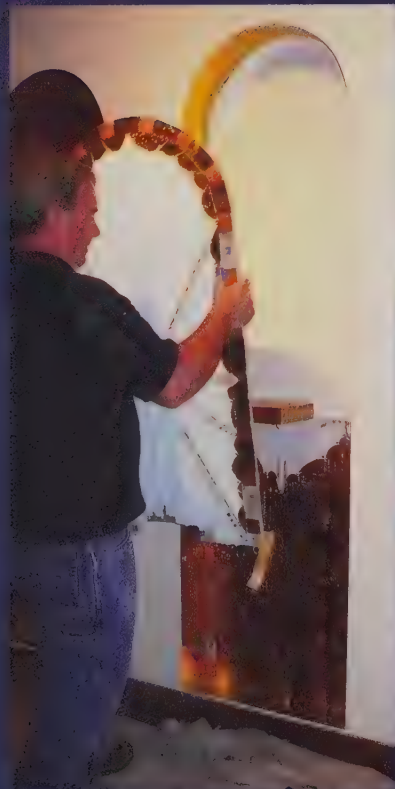
View from the sanctuary to the entrance, with diffused light from outside.



The lobby of the church is filled with light in a two-story space.

Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration Chapel Mosaic

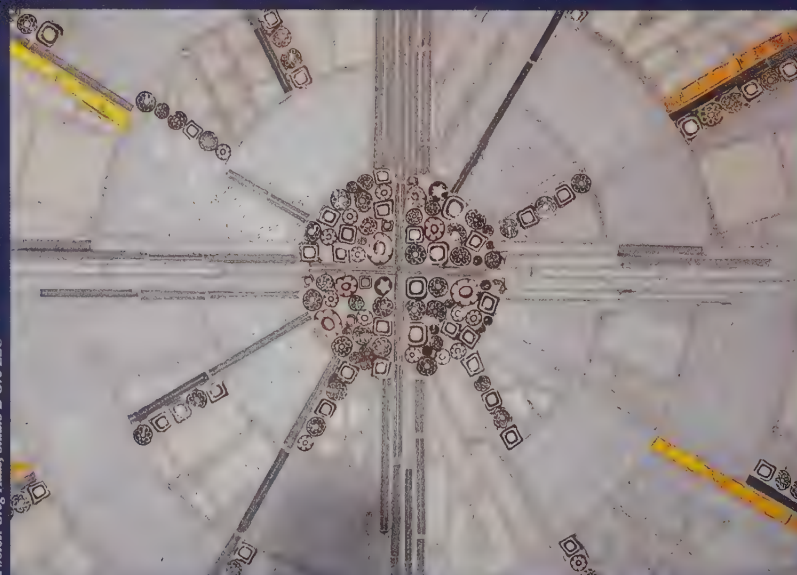
Greg Haas, Studio D'Oro, LLC › Houston, Texas



Because this chapel operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, there was little interest in suspending prayer activities for up to two weeks to install mosaics. Yet the parish sought to refurbish this intimate chapel space. The chapel refurbishment had to be done economically since the new main church still awaited completion of its full stained glass window program. Accordingly, there was no funding to cover weeks of labor, equipment rentals, and onsite living expenses for artisans working in the chapel.

To save time and cost, Studio D'Oro developed a panelized mosaic solution comprising prefabricated and pre-mounted mosaic on lightweight cementitious panels. There was no need to spend weeks or extra cost onsite installing a custom mosaic work—the work was done in the studio under controlled conditions. The mosaic was delivered essentially complete to the chapel and installed in just a few hours, analogous to hanging a series of paintings. Fabrication on modern cementitious panels allowed this parish to feature custom art in a timeless form.

Mosaics are prefabricated in panels and delivered for installation, which requires only simple tools such as screwdrivers.



Detail of the finished mosaic panel for the chapel reredos.



Chapel after installation of mosaic panels.

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Evangelization Through the Arts

By JOSEPH MALHAM

TRUE EVANGELIZATION IS THE UNVEILING OF DIVINE TRUTH and eternal beauty through the actions of our hands and the movements of our hearts in the service of others. Seen through this lens, evangelization is alive and flourishing. Whether by participating in bible studies; support groups; healing ministries; adult, teen, and youth faith formation; or food pantries and soup kitchens, men and women of faith are proving that it is indeed possible to bear witness to the Word of God without uttering too many of their own. As St. Francis of Assisi said in an oft-quoted but still wonderfully appropriate maxim: "Preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary use words."

We find ourselves in a time when budgets are stretched and the mission of religious communities, which often includes evangelization, is in jeopardy. Now is the time for congregations to think creatively about their mission, and how to further evangelization. This article proposes creative ways for congregations to advance their mission when resources are scarce, through a very old tradition born anew.

St. Paul says that we are many parts of one body and that each member contributes to the building up of the Ekklesia, the community, through individual talents and gifts. One of the boldest and most exciting ways in which members can manifest the Christian message of hope, peace, and love in the community is one not readily associated with the path of evangelization: the arts. For some this may seem an odd and impractical way to break open the Word for a hungry seeker, but if one considers the ancient tradition of the image and its central role in Christian theology, it becomes an endeavor that is recovered rather than initiated. From the unknown painters of the catacombs and the medieval stonemasons to Michelangelo, Albrecht Dürer, and even the 20th-century communist and friend of Pope John XXIII, Giacomo Manzù, artists have always had the gift of co-creating, of manifesting the divine in dimensional form, with a power and intensity that can still transform lives and act as a window into God's eternal realm. In the past 40 or 50 years sacred art, particularly representational, has taken a back seat along with the artist who creates it. In recent years communities are once again celebrating the theology of the image in their worship with a spirit of renewal.

Gregory the Great pastor Fr. Paul Wachdorf (left) and artist-in-residence Joseph Malham discuss icons in the artist's studio in the parish center.



For the past ten years, I have had the honor to be one of several artists in residence at St. Gregory the Great Church in Chicago. St. Gregory is a small parish on fire with a big and bold vision. In 2001, the pastor wanted to explore new ways in which people of all faiths could find a welcoming home within the richly carved Gothic portals of St. Gregory. For the Catholics of the neighborhood this entails an emphasis on beauty and integrity in the presentation of the liturgy and the depth of the preaching; for the wider community it means a sense of welcome and inclusiveness and a celebration of faith through the visual, musical, and literary arts. With that in mind the pastor invited me (an iconographer and writer); a fine chamber music ensemble that evolved, under the direction of St. Gregory music director Patrick Godon, into the International Chamber Artists; and a nationally noted theater group called Quest to take up residency at the church and, using our unique disciplines and voices, to proclaim the Gospel to the community. Out of this was born the Evangelization Through the Arts ministry.

The concept of evangelizing through the arts is not a new one in the Christian tradition. But the bold vision employed by St. Gregory the Great and many faith communities around the country proves that the idea is, like the faith itself, to quote St. Augustine of Hippo, a beauty "ever ancient, ever new." In Byzantium, the theology of the image, so deeply plumbed and eloquently articulated by theologians and lay artists, resulted in the evolution and spread of the icon as a sacramental object worthy of veneration and on par with the cross, the liturgy, and Scripture. In the Middle Ages, the theology of space reached a pinnacle of glory in the conceptualizing and executing of the magnificent cathedrals. From the north of England to the Rhineland of Germany to the rolling plains of Burgundy in France, stone and glass soared into the heavens with the intention of being "read" in the same way one would read scripture to learn the epic history of God's love and the individual's journey to the glory of the new and heavenly Jerusalem. Even in the realm of music, evangelization has been the catalyst as well as the ultimate goal of some of the great works in the history of Western civilization. The rising and the falling notes of a Gregorian Miserere, the

St. Gregory Church music director Patrick Godon leads a performance of his International Chamber Artists at one of several concerts held in the church each year.



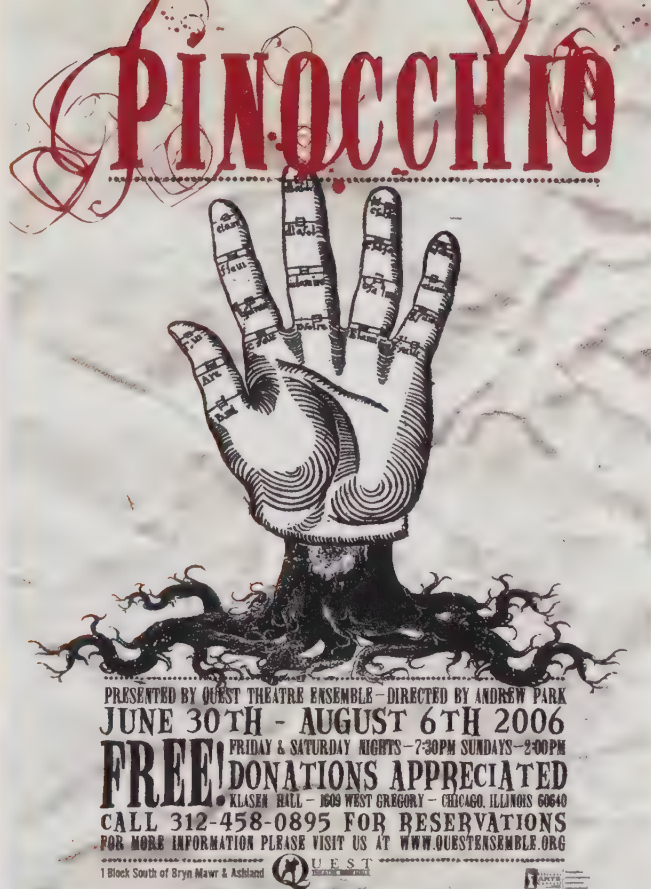


Icon of the Christ Pantocrator (egg tempera and 23-karat gold leaf on panel) by St. Gregory the Great artist-in-residence, iconographer, and author Joseph Malham.

thunderous majesty of a Mozart *Dies Irae*, or the soaring, soul-filling majesty of a Haydn *Gloria* all can be just as effective in drawing one into the center of God's mystery as a contemplative reading of scripture or the *Spiritual Exercises*. In short, Christian art never just lies about as mere decoration or conversation piece but, on the contrary, plays a vital and sacred role in the manifestation of God's love and providence in our earthly journey towards the everlasting kingdom.

What are the mechanics of the Evangelization Through the Arts ministry, and how does a community begin to implement it in the structure of their parochial and even liturgical life? I humbly suggest using St. Gregory the Great Church as a model. If a parish wishes to proclaim the Word through the arts then open the doors and welcome into the congregation artists who possess the talent and the spiritual depths to manifest this ministry in the community. Father Paul Wachdorf, pastor at St. Gregory the Great Church, wholeheartedly supports the Evangelization Through the Arts ministry. Not only because of the excitement and spiritual frisson it brings to the parish and the community but also because of the way it helps build up the church, the visible body of God's people. "People often take an intellectual approach to church, to faith, to God," Father Paul says, "but ignore the possibility of accessing God through beauty."

Father Paul, whose father was a musician, sees great value in the Evangelization Through the Arts, not just as a way of "getting people back in church" but in creating a mutually beneficial atmosphere where the church nurtures and sponsors artists who in turn create work revealing the heart of God's love and beauty. Caveats, however, do apply, and



Poster of a play by the nationally renowned Quest Theatre, who have mounted their productions at St. Gregory for nearly a decade.

Father Paul feels it wise to embrace them proactively rather than reactively before giving artisans space and an outlet for their work. The artists who come aboard must be people of faith, he says, or the whole endeavor becomes a futile exercise in commercial enterprise dressed up as spirituality. "If artists are just looking for money or space then the church is sponsoring people who just want to sell their wares. It is important that artists who are part of this vision give back in whatever ways they can in terms of time, treasure, and talent."

Once these guiding principles are in place, it is easier for a community to establish an Evangelization Through the Arts ministry and expand it to any height or level where they are comfortable. Not every faith community needs to strive to achieve in a short time what churches like St. Gregory have taken nearly a decade to build. However, with even limited resources, just one artistic outreach could touch many lives, reap an abundant spiritual harvest, and extend the congregation's mission. It would be a boon to the community to host The Anonymous 4 for a Christmas concert, Maya Angelou for a poetry reading, or Kathleen Norris for a lecture on monastic spirituality, but the reality is that those heights are neither feasible nor necessary for most churches struggling to meet their monthly expenses. Start small but start substantively and in a spiritually nourishing fashion. Some examples might include finding local artists, preferably members of the congregation, to mount a sacred music or choral performance in the church for a freewill offering or a nominal admission charge. Young, aspiring artists, seeking venues to show their work, are never in short supply. It might be a wonderful idea to invite young people to create expressions of their faith journey in


visual, auditory, or musical form. Set a date and have all the works, paintings, poems, dance, or music displayed or performed in one grand and celebratory night for the whole community.

Another way in which art and evangelization can be dovetailed with the congregation's mission is by integrating creations of individual artists into the liturgy and worship of the community. Again, not every community has the wherewithal to commission a sacred choral work by John Tavener or Arvo Pärt, or an icon or processional cross by a world-famous artist, but many can bring forth sublime works of strength and beauty from the hands of people in their own communities. Imagine the pride of ownership and the rich, textured spiritual legacy of a song of celebration, a centennial poem, a tapestry, or a painting created for a community by one of its members.

An example of the way St. Gregory Church has endeavored to dovetail the artist's talents into the evangelizing mission of the community is the sponsorship of the Quest Theatre Ensemble. While casting about for a home back in 2002, this extraordinarily talented group of young performers made a connection with St. Gregory Church and were invited to come aboard as artists in residence. Using the lower level of the school gymnasium as a theater, the Quest group mounts new versions of old standards such as Pinocchio and Zorro, and presents original musical comedies and dramas whose moral undertones appeal to both children and adults. Quest performs on a strictly freewill offering basis; in exchange for the use of the space they present seasonal spiritual dramas in St. Gregory's church and lend their artistic services to liturgies throughout the year. What could have been just another Chicago theater group in search of a home has become a nationally respected ensemble that, having been given a forum for its talents, now exposes thousands of people of all denomina-

tions (or none) to St. Gregory and its Evangelization Through the Arts initiative. It is an all-round, low-maintenance, win-win situation and in the end the vision of the both the artists and the parish are served.

When chided by the Pharisees for the ebullience of the public response to his presence, Jesus responded that even if his followers did not exult "the very stones would cry out." In the final analysis, it is not how a community celebrates faith through art or the level of professionalism it employs in doing so; rather, it is a matter of constantly returning to the question of why we celebrate. In a Byzantine icon the landscape is generally stylized, offering almost abstract interpretations of rocks, trees, architecture, and even water. The reason is that because of the Incarnation the belief in the Emmanuel who is God with us, all the physical stuff of existence has been transformed, turned upside down, inside out, and recast with a divine light emanating from deep within. Or, as Teilhard de Chardin said, because of the Incarnation all matter has become incarnate.

Evangelizing through art is not a luxury, an obligation, or a hip edgy way to get the un-churched into the pews as paying and praying conformists. On the contrary, it is a painting, a poem, a song of unimaginable sweetness that in its truth and beauty bubbles up from our very depths to point towards the One who is the source of all truth and beauty. In this light, the Evangelization Through the Arts ministry is a path down which one discovers true liberation and genuine exaltation so intense that, like those proverbial stones, we too will exclaim: "How can I keep from singing?" 

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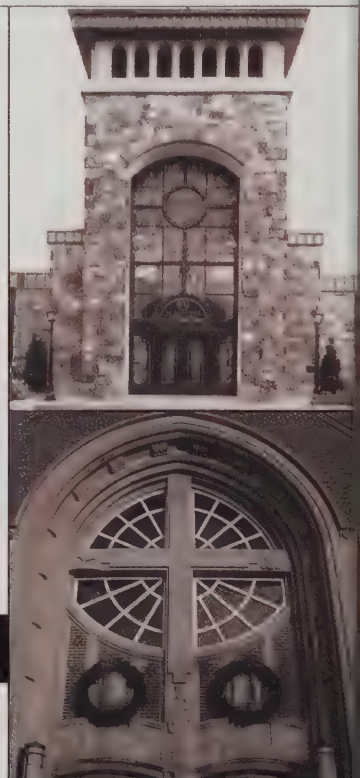
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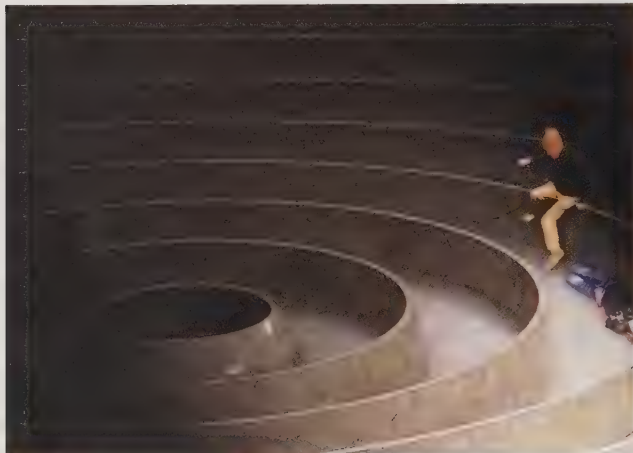
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NOTES & COMMENTS

SACRED SPACE FOR ATHEISM

No, it's not a typo. A recent design competition sought designs for sacred space for atheists. The competition was sponsored by the Socio Design Foundation, which, according to its website (sociodesignfoundation.org), seeks "to further the dialogue of architecture's sociological impact." To foster this dialog, Socio Design runs international architecture competitions open to students and professionals. The sacred space



for atheism competition asked: "There are churches and temples for christians, jews, muslims, buddhists, etc., but what of atheists? What spatial form would their place of contemplation be?"

Setting aside a discussion about the differences between a space that is sacred and one that is contemplative, the competition resulted in a winning design and two honorable mentions, one of which is shown here.

"Depressions may bring people closer to the church but so do funerals."

Clarence Darrow (1857–1938)

Anne Beatrice Baker, who graduated from the University of Cincinnati in with a Bachelor of Science degree in Architecture in 2009 (and plans to begin graduate studies in architecture this fall), produced a design arresting in its visual impact and provoking in its concept. She writes:

"The atheist user of this space experiences a communion with and acceptance of those forces of life which define human existence on Earth, and engages in a soothing surrender to the way things are. The space for occupation is constructed on the bottom of an inverted dome, with half walls rippling outward and upward toward the entrance of the space, like the after effects of a droplet of water falling into a pond, or of an air bubble which rises to its surface. The user, through architectural experience of these energies in nature, is in turn empowered to be their own center."

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The editors of *Faith & Form* want to bring its readers the latest news of those involved in the fields of religion, art, and architecture. Send press releases and materials to the attention of Michael J. Crosbie, Editor, *Faith & Form*, 47 Grandview Terrace, Essex, CT 06426; email: mcrosbie@faithandform.com.

BOOK REVIEW

In the Beginning is the Icon: A Liberative Theology of Images, Visual Arts, and Culture, Sigurd Bergmann (Equinox Publishing, Ltd.), \$85. The mission of this book is to raise awareness about the intrinsic value of images and image perception among those who wish to reflect on God and on pictorial expressions of different experiences from encounters with divinity in earthly and historical situations. In this book, reflections on iconography, art theory, philosophical esthetics, art history,

and the anthropology of art intersect with reflections on theology and religious studies. A central question of the book is how God, through human creation and observation of pictures, can have a liberating function in images. Within the context of a liberative theological approach to the interpretation of God and an esthetic that focuses on the love of the poor, this book develops a constructive proposal for a contextual art theology. In the foreword to this book, Nicholas Wolterstorff of the University of Virginia writes that this book "...is a breakthrough in theological esthetics..."



A Liberative Theology of
Images, Visual Arts and Culture

Sigurd Bergmann

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LET'S TALK THE TALK

JUST ONE MORE THING... ★ BETTY H. MEYER

MOST ARCHITECTS BEGIN a new project spending countless hours consulting with a client. It is important for them to get a feel for how the structure will be used by its occupants and to

gain insights into the cultural context of the community at large. Louis Sullivan's dictum, "Form follows function," remains an underlying principle of the profession. Ideally, in religious architecture, consultation will not be confined just to the building committee, but will include open sessions with the entire congregation.

Once functionality has been determined, the architect must take this list of verbs and produce a solid design that fosters positive social interaction while it also attempts to make a strong statement aesthetically. Moving from a blank piece of paper (or from a computer monitor) to a finished design is very hard work that is often rewarded by a feeling of exhilaration. This emotion may be short-lived when one prepares a presentation for the client. Doubts begin to creep in. Will they like my design? Will they understand it? As Robert Campbell, architecture critic for the *Boston Globe* says, "This is the moment the architect must put on his working clothes."

It is time to re-connect with the client, and this may require some translation. Architectural drawings that are indecipherable to the layperson may as well be hieroglyphics on a cave wall. This is why experienced designers make colorful renderings or assemble models of the structure to be built. The client will not necessarily understand that a circle on a sheet of drawings represents a tree. It is up to the designer to make it all come alive.

Artists and architects often speak a language of their own. This is true of any trade, craft, or profession. This language allows them to communicate with colleagues, to be precise in detail, and serves as a kind of shorthand for expressing key concepts. This is all well and good, but full understanding by the client, the democratization of the design process if you will, is a critical part of the task. To have a congregation truly grasp and enthusiastically support a building project is the goal. Successfully establishing a sense of teamwork and involvement brings a degree of wholeness to the process that will lead to a smoother construction phase and will ensure that issues of sustainability will be an important ongoing concern for all.

BETTY H. MEYER IS EDITOR EMERITUS OF *FAITH & FORM* AND CAN BE REACHED BY EMAIL AT BMeyer@FaithandForm.com

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